NOVEMBER 1957

The Reformed Journal

A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT AND OPINION

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THE JAPANESE CHURCH MUST REPENT
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LETTERS

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The Inexpressible Gift

Thanks be unto God for His inexpressible gift.
II CORINTHIANS 9:15

by Lewis B. Smedes

'O GIVE THANKS is good. For God has made us hanks-giving creatures. And he has given us all ıore than we can express.

Most of our thanksgiving will be centered on ıings which we can express. We accept them all s good gifts. Some of them come to my mind as I rite.

am thankful for the gift of being alive, for my body, my mind, my soul.

am thankful for people around me who love me and accept me as part of their lives.

am thankful for a country that took my immigrant parents into its life and, in them, took me.

am thankful for peace, that my city is not burned, that the planes flying over my house are friendly.

am thankful for work to do and for those who give me the opportunity to do it.

am thankful for beautiful things, that reality everywhere has beauty.

am thankful for all the gadgets that help make my body comfortable and my living pleasant.

The number of things that can be expressed is great. To express thanks for them is easy. But what of God's inexpressible gift? How can we give thanks for a gift that we cannot express? What if all things for which we express thanks were taken away? Would there be no thanksgiving? The answer is, first, that all these things shall be taken away. And there will be thanksgiving. For there will be the one inexpressible gift. It is the "one thing needful which shall not be taken away." He who lives in this gift is thankful in the center of his life. And somehow in being thankful, there will be expression of thanks even for that which is inexpressible.

There was One who expressed this gift. He was *the* expression of it bodily. It took the miracle of a divine-human life to express it. It took infinite pain to express it. It took a Gethsemane to express it. It took a gibbet with the Son of God upon it to express this inexpressible gift. The miracle of Christ was that the inexpressible gift was expressed on earth. We cannot repeat the miracle. We can only live in it. For the miracle was God's love incarnate. And when we live in Christ we live in God's love. This is the secret of *being* thankful.

Being thankful is, I think, to have thankfulness as our mode of life: it is to *exist thankfully*. It comes to almost the same thing as to live in God's love. It is not only to have love *for* God, but to have His love as the strength and foundation of our lives: to live in and through and upon it. Existing and growing in divine love, we learn to accept Him, His ways, and His gifts. To *accept* His gifts is to be thankful for them. It is to give thanks.

To express thanks demands a confession that all we are and all we have are gifts of God's love. God's gift of love is unconditional. He gives it wheresoever and to whomsoever He wills. To accept, really to accept with our whole being, what we are and have as a gift, is a humbling thing. It is too humiliating in its judgment upon us for the self-righteous to bear. It can be truly accepted, by one who knows that he, too, has been accepted, that he, the unacceptable, has been accepted by a God who accepts as He forgives.

When we have learned from God's love to accept His gifts as the gifts they are, we will learn to give thanks for them. God's inexpressible gift does not put His lesser gifts to shame. It brightens them and gives them a lustre they lack when separated from His love in Christ. To rejoice in God's gift of saving love does not demand a refusal to rejoice in God's gift of the world and its things. We need not hate the world in order to love God. We need not leave the world in order to come to God. We need not despise His lesser gifts in order to be thankful for His inexpressible gift.

We must, I suggested, learn to accept the world of things, of men, and ourselves as God accepts them. We learn how He accepts them when we come to know His inexpressible gift. From this we know that the unacceptable has been accepted by Him. We know that the rejected one has been received by Him. We know that we are loved and accepted as we are. For while we were yet sinners, God loved us. And he whom much has been forgiven, loveth much. Or, he who has been accepted by God learns to accept God's gifts.

This teaches us how we are to accept the world as a gift and thus give thanks for it. We must accept it as it is. We cannot demand that it be totally other than it is. It is found wanting in much, filled with tensions, inordinate in waste, lavish in destruction, unpredictable in its final

demand upon us. Yet, this is the world of which it is written: God so loved. And we must love it too. We must accept it as it is and be glad that it is what it is. Living in God's love for the world, we may give thanks for it and for all its things.

It teaches us to accept the people around us as gifts and thus give thanks for them. A painful discovery in a person's growth is the discovery that he does not live by or unto himself. There are others who limit his freedom, impinge upon his comforts, are unresponsive to his needs, and are sometimes competitors for his security. These others must be accepted by us and we must be glad that they are here. Living as we do, in God's love, we will love them and be glad that they exist. We will be glad even if their gladness excludes our gladness. For we will realize that they too exist as a gift of God to themselves. We will realize that all that they are and all that they have are gifts of God. We will be glad for these gifts: for those who possess them and for what they possess. We will be thankful for the other people because we will learn to love them as God loves them. We will, that is, love them *not* for what they might become to us, but we will love them as they are. To love is to accept; to accept is to be thankful. And living in God's love, accepting His inexpressible gift, we will be thankful for this gift which we can express: the gift of other people around us.

It teaches us, finally, to accept ourselves as gifts and be thankful for ourselves. We will be thankful that we exist, that we are living, real, existing creatures. We will rejoice in our very being. And we will rejoice that we are what we are and that we have what we have. We will accept even ourselves as God accepts us, gladly and in love. We will be glad that we are what God made us; we will not deplore that we are not something other than what we are. We can never accept God's world or God's creatures unless we accept ourselves too. And we must give thanks for ourselves.

When we make confession of our faith in God, we are told we must abhor ourselves. How can we, then, be thankful to God for what we are even while we abhor ourselves? The answer is that there is a right and a wrong way to be thankful for ourselves. Whenever we are thankful for our moral superiority, our spiritual attainments, our legal righteousness, we are wrongly thankful. The Pharisee was thankful for himself in a way. He said: "I thank Thee that I am not as this publican." His was a thankfulness not born of a realization that all he had was a gift. He was not able to think of himself as a gift; he thought of himself as an attainment. Hence, he naturally felt superior, and expressed his feeling with the hypocritical use of the word thanks. Only he whom much has be forgiven, that is, only he who knows he has *be* freely accepted can accept himself and what he as a gift. To accept ourselves as God accepts we must, indeed, in contrast to the Pharisee, abh ourselves for our sins.

Yet, it is a strange abhorrence. For it means th we can accept ourselves and be thankful for ou selves after all. When we accept ourselves as gift of God and make no pretense to having attain to ourselves, we are truly abhorring ourselves. A this is to accept ourselves as God accepts us, wh we are yet sinners. We can rejoice in what we a We can be glad that we are what we are. We mu be glad, for how else can we be thankful?

Then, too, it is only as we accept ourselves joy and thankfulness that we can deny ourselv and give ourselves to our Lord. How could we off to God as our highest sacrifice that which we our hearts despise? How could we give back to G that which we were not glad to have been give It would be a meager sacrifice indeed were we give God what we hate.

This is all to say that the inexpressible gift lea us to be truly thankful for the gifts which we ca express. The gift of which Christ was the incarna expression and which can never be expressed aga is the one gift that fills us with joy and than for all other gifts. In Christ, we can live in Goc world of things and men, be thankful for the accepting them all as God accepts them, and lovi them as He loves them.

Yet, even thus, our acceptance of all God's gif is a troubled acceptance. For we are afraid we sha lose them. And we hate to lose them just becau His gifts are precious. But we shall lose the all. The world of things, the world of belov people, our own earthly life, all these are gifts whi shall be taken away. And this temporary charact of His gifts is part of the world which we mu accept and be thankful for. Yet, there is the on thing needful that shall not be taken away. The is the inexpressible gift. It cannot be taken awa While for a time the other gifts remain, it is th one thing that gives meaning to them and gratitu to us for them. And when all else is taken away, th inexpressible gift is the one thing that remains. B since gratitude flows from our living in it no gratitude shall remain with it. Living in God inexpressible gift of love, however, we find gra to be thankful at the very root of our existenc And so we shall yet give thanks even when all el for which we now give thanks is taken away.

From the depths of our very existence, then, w say: Thanks be unto God for His inexpressib gift!

Why *United* Theological Education in Northern Nigeria?

by Harry R. Boer

THE 1955 SYNOD of the Christian Reformed Church, in response to a request from the Board of Missions, decided to lend a teacher to the Training Center of the Sudan United Mission at Gindiri in Northern Nigeria for the training of native pastors. Synod did this in the light of the expressed Board opinion that this would hopefully be "the beginning of a seminary program that may have great significance for the future of the African Church."

The contemplated theological training program, it appeared, had to be organized from the bottom up. Fundamental questions had to be resolved before any kind of training could be begun. At what academic level is the instruction to take place? Which missions and which churches are to take part in the undertaking? What will be the relation of the school to the missions and to the churches? Should the school be associated with an existing missionary institution or should it lead a life of its own on a separate site? What experience have other missions and churches in Nigeria and elsewhere had in conducting theological training programs in English or in other Western languages? How is the distinctiveness of the several doctrinal, ecclesiastical and liturgical traditions to be maintained in a school of a united character?

In pursuing the answers to these and other questions a plan was drawn up for the organization of a theological school which will have the support of seven missions and seven churches that have grown out of their work. An outline of this plan was presented to *Journal* readers in the March 1957 issue.

Meanwhile, some at home began to have serious thoughts as to the wisdom of a united theological training program. It was not seen how Lutherans, Baptists, Reformed, and others could fruitfully work together in a common theological training program. These doubts came to a head at the Synod of 1957 which had to deal with an overture objecting to the proposed program in Northern Nigeria because we "cannot and may not compromise our doctrinal and ecclesiastical principles."

With this overture Synod dealt very firmly and very clearly. It stated that it is the African Church, not the Christian Reformed Church, which contemplates participation in a program of interdenominational theological education. It also encouraged the present writer to carry forward the plans to teach in the United Theological Seminary. Synod further noted that "this school will come into existence, and native pastors for our sister churches will be trained there, whether or not we provide a missionary teacher. The distinctive situation of the African Church requires a united effort."

This language leaves nothing to be desired as to decisiveness and especially as to spirit and intent. It has ended the debate about the desirability of a united theological school in Northern Nigeria, and that by a vote of 92 to 16.

Still, the question was there, and the summary language with which Synod had in the nature of the case to deal with the problem may not have wholly met all questions. It is my personal feeling that in a matter of so great moment there should be the fullest possible understanding as to why we cannot do with less than the united theological school that has been proposed.

THE THEOLOGICAL SITUATION IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

In this article I wish to address myself to the *theological* side of the question. Other aspects, such as the united desire of the churches concerned, the inability of single missions or churches to maintain adequate theological schools, the need that exists for training at the highest level of which African students are capable, the need for African Christians and churches to work together wherever they can, and more such considerations, I shall at this time pass by. The challenge to united theological education was occasioned by specifically theological considerations. I wish at this time therefore to take up that single problem.

Perhaps the most characteristic feature of the Christianity that obtains in Northern Nigeria (and, I surmise, in far wider African areas) is that it is *theologically undiscriminating* and therefore *theologically undifferentiated.* The fifteen or so missions that are now working in Northern Nigeria have under God's blessing succeeded admirably in establishing *the gospel.* The good news of the saving grace of God in Christ is understood by Africans, it has set them free from the bondage of sinister fears in which they formerly lived, and it has opened up for them perspectives of advance into ever widening areas of Christian freedom and service.

This the missions have done. Not one of them, however, has to the best of my knowledge, succeeded into any significant degree in establishing its specifically denominational beliefs. I have attended all kinds of meetings, heard all kinds of speakers in discussions, in talks, in sermons, in prayers, in teachings; I have taught evangelists, catechists, and pastors in refresher courses lasting two or three months; I have had personal contacts with these and many others. In all of these contacts and experiences one fact always obtrudes itself upon me with singular force: these men know the gospel, but it does not exist for them in any specific theological framework; they do not hold one evangelical view of the gospel in distinction from another. I have observed this fact to a number of missionaries and none has ever questioned the validity of the observation.

The theologically undiscriminating and undifferentiated character of Christianity in this area is strikingly illustrated by an experience which I recently had. During June and July of this year I conducted a refresher course for nine pastors. One of the subjects we studied was Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. In it we were joined by fifteen members of the class of a British colleague who are being prepared for the ministry.

An inevitable subject of discussion occasioned by the first four chapters of the epistle was that of church disunity and reunion. At home I tend to press the ecumenical emphasis because there is so little appreciation among us of the visible unity of the Church of Christ. Here on the mission field I find myself in the role of a restrainer because the implications of the uncritical ecumenicity held by so many church leaders are so little understood.

It was not very long before I found myself belabored (in a very kindly way) for the obstructions raised by missionaries to the creation of one united church in Northern Nigeria (instead of the federation of churches which now exists). To meet this situation I laid what I considered to be a concrete and wholly transparent trump card on the table. I said: If there is to be one church, then there must be possible a free exchange of ministers among the various sections of the church. To this all agreed. Now on the Plateau where we are, I went on, the church is predominantly Baptist. In the Benue Valley it is to a large extent Reformed. If there is to be a free exchange of ministers between these two sections, the Plateau Baptist minister must be able to accept a call from a Benus Valley church. But if he does so, he will soon find himself asked to baptize infants. How do you propose to meet this situation? At this point I leaned back against the blackboard, not without some confidence and complacency, and waited to see how my African brethren would extricate themselves from this predicament.

There was no difficulty at all. Up rose the best known and most educated of the pastors, who said: Why, Malam, that is no problem. If parents want their babies baptized we will baptize the babies, and if they want them to wait until they can act for themselves we will let them wait. We see no reason why that should be a bar to church union. In this he was cheerfully joined by others in both sections of the group. To the best of my knowledge there was no dissent.

Nor was this a hypothetical answer. There is not far from where I live a mission area which was formerly Anglican but has since become Baptist. The Anglican tradition has not been wholly lost in it, however, and the same pastor baptizes infants and adults according to the preference expressed. The missionary community alone sees an anomaly here.

This illustration is the more significant because the men who pressed the point were men of Baptist background. Pedo-baptist ministers can baptize infants *and* adults. The Baptist minister cannot baptize infants according to the central tenet of his faith. None can accuse the Baptist section of the missionary community in Northern Nigeria of not being theologically self-conscious. Yet in spite of its well-crystallized convictions on the subject, it has not succeeded in implanting similar convictions in the African church and her leadership. There is no reason to believe that missions holding to other theological emphases have been more successful.

I do not wish to suggest that if men who have been instructed from a particular background were pressed they would not be able to make distinctions which they have been taught. I do mean, and mean seriously, that these distinctions are not meaningful for them, do not live for them. They do not become part of their thinking, they do not motivate their action, they do not condition their approach to Scripture, to their preaching, teaching, prayers or pastoral work.

That this is so is not owing to the missions or to the missionary teachers. It arises from the nature of the situation, from the fact that Africans are just as human as Europeans and Americans.

The Significance of History

Let us ask ourselves how we became Calvinists. Is Calvinism something we were *taught*, or is it for us an historical growth and experience? Superficially it may seem that we are Calvinists because we have been taught to be that. Actually this is far being the whole truth, and taken by itself it is not the truth at all. As boys and girls grow up among us they grow up *in a tradition*. Through influences that come to them from many quarters, formally and informally, they unconsciously begin to identify themselves with their forebears who went through

nental struggles, and not infrequently through great rivation and stress, in order that the deposit now ransmitted to their descendants through home, hurch, school, and otherwise might be preserved. Our distinctive doctrines are more than doctrines. They are a *heritage*. They come to us clothed in the oncreteness of historical searching, struggle, and ictory. They come to us out of the crucible of nany challenging confrontations. So, and not otherwise, are we Calvinists. So, and not otherwise, have other theological traditions come into being. When a particular tradition loses its vigor this is usually in no small degree due to a loss of historical sense among those who hold it. When a tradition ceases to be a heritage and becomes only a doctrine that is taught it ceases to be the living force it ought to be.

Now the Church in Northern Nigeria has not yet gone through such a history. The Calvinism or the Lutheranism or the Anglicanism or the Methodism that she knows is not for her a heritage. It is for her a teaching and it does not seem to affect her very deeply. This must not surprise us. These teachings are not for her the personal or collective answer to a challenge to her deepest convictions, nor do they have for her an historical relevance.

The African Church has indeed been confronted and challenged; she is constantly being confronted and challenged, not infrequently very intensely. This confrontation, however, does not have a theological aspect so much as a *religious* and an *ethical* one. Christians of Northern Nigeria know the difference between Christ and the demons, they know the difference between faith and fetish, between the Word of God and the imprecations of the witch doctor, between the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Allah of their Mohammedan neighbors.

On the other hand, the African Christian seems little to know and care about the distinction between the Lutheran and the Reformed conception of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper; between episcopal succession and other ordination, between Arminianism and Calvinism. These differences, great though they loom among us of the West, are about as meaningful to Northern Nigeria Christianity as the distinction between infra-lapsarianism and supra-lapsarianism is to the average Calvinist. For the African the great and all-overshadowing antithesis is between the powers of Light and the powers of Darkness as they bear upon his daily life. Distinctions between the children of Light among themselves are for him matters of information, the significance of which is not apparent to him, in any case not so apparent that they warrant basic divisions in the body of Christ.

En Bloc Christianity

African Christians do see distinctions, but they are always of a kind in which Christianity, specifically Protestant Christianity, stands *en bloc* over against opposing forces: Mohammedanism, paganism, the sects, Roman Catholicism. But these distinctions are for him a religious apprehension and intuition, not theological conceptions that arise out of a careful exegetical, doctrinal, and historical study of how Scripture understands the gospel. Where there is agreement in the fundamentals of the gospel, the African tends to be impatient when differences in the superstructure are stressed.

There are indeed specific questions about which Christians, and especially the leaders, can become quite excited. But they are all *ethical* questions, not theological. They are such questions as divorce, polygamy, drinking, church discipline (nearly always on moral matters) and church union. The latter is for us a predominantly theological question. Not so for the African. For him church union is solely a question of *fellowship*. He cannot see why the *en bloc* Christianity which he shares with his brethren cannot come to *en bloc* expression.

This is the theological situation in Northern Nigeria as I see it. Will this situation change? It would seem that it is bound to. It is quite conceivable that the *en bloc* view of Christian fellowship will continue, but within it theological distinctions are bound to arise. The African Church will increasingly have her own history, she will increasingly lean less on the missions and more on her own resources. That history will confront her with problems of all kinds and they will more and more bear a theological character as the Church becomes acquainted with the heritage of the Church of all ages and as she seeks to understand her duty in the light of God's Word amid the growing complexity of African life. It is the duty of a theological school to acquaint its students with the manner in which the Church of other times and other places met the challenges that came to her from without and from within. But acquaintance does not necessarily mean acceptance. It cannot mean that. Acceptance — I mean real, vital, relevant acceptance — will come when the solution arrived at elsewhere fits the existential African situation. Such an acceptance, however, is not an intellectual assent to a teaching. It is the identification on the part of the African Church with the struggles of the Church of Christ elsewhere and it will therefore mean the appropriation of a heritage.

The African Church will also doubtless find her own answers to the problems that she will come to face. In that case the distinctions that she will come to hold, the elaborated creed that she will come to confess, will be the expression of a heritage that she herself will build. More likely there will be a fusing and a blending of these two ways to the theological crystallization of her faith. Certain it

is in any case that this theological crystallization cannot simply be given to her. She must grow into it herself.

Perhaps this will make it clearer why united theological education is not at all uncongenial to the existing situation but rather the best way to meet it. It is not a second best, a reluctant surrender, to an uncritical desire on the part of the African Church. Any other arrangement would be inferior because it would not meet the Church where she is. It would be assuming a maturity on her part that she does not have, and it would compel her to submit to a situation that she would not understand.

The Saturated Sponge

It may still be urged that if it is our duty to prepare the African Church to meet the challenges that she will have in time to meet, and if we must lead her as correctly as we can into the meaning of Scripture, then we should undertake to discharge these tasks from a wholly Reformed point of view. The answer to this objection is the answer of the saturated sponge. The present ability of the brightest young African meaningfully to absorb our Western theological distinctions is strictly limited. To give him more than he can assimilate is to raise expectations among ourselves that will not be realized and to invite the danger of a pedantic attitude on his part that would hinder the discharge of his ministry. The present school plan provides fo separate weekly instruction in the distinctive trad tions of the sending churches that gave birth t the several churches on the field. When this oppor tunity is faithfully utilized by student and teache during three or four years' time, the student wi be given all that he can handle in the way of distinc tive confessional, liturgical, and church govern mental teachings. There is little reason to believ that a wholly Reformed or a wholly Baptist or wholly Lutheran seminary would turn our men mor distinctly Reformed, Baptist, or Lutheran than wi now be the case.

The Reformed bias with which students from ou mission areas will come to the school will be encour aged in the manner indicated. Whatever furthe benefits a more intensive Reformed training woul confer in a wholly separate Reformed institutio must in fairness be weighed against the disadvan tages that would result from a training received i isolation from other prospective leaders of the smal Christian minority (350,000 in a population of 1 000,000), from the limitations placed upon the aca demic quality of the local training in the way o teaching personnel and library facilities, and, no least, from the long-run danger of going contrar to the express will and desire of the Church which if we insisted on a separate school, would less accep it as a gift than yield to it as an imposition.

Pens, Pennies, Patrons

by John Timmerman

A WRITER *writes*; he fills notebooks, cartons, a trunk, a room. He writes till he is boxed in between unsubmitted and rejected manuscripts, and if his room should go up in flames he would be savoring the phrases with which he will immortalize his tragedy. A *writer* writes till he grows fat and flabby on public incense or until he is hanged as a disturber of the peace. He composes until success, antagonism, the failure of his shaping imagination, or death stops him. And just before he dies he will probably make a striking remark or compose an epitaph.

Unfortunately such literary compulsion, such a seething urge to verbalization, does not always reside in genius. It is shared by Zane Grey, who wrote sixty-three novels with a sale above 19,000,000 copies. It is shared by Mrs. Sigourney, who wrote edifying effusions on such subjects as "Monody for the Death of the Principal of the Connecticut Retreat for the Insane." It is shared by the poetess of the Ladies' Aid gurgling a long-rimed poem on the pastor's twenty-fifth anniversary, and it is shared by the bard of Woden, Iowa, singing the Man on the Tractor.

The good and the bad; there are thousands upon thousands of them in the United States dulling their pens, blurring their pencils, shredding their typewriter ribbons. A few are worth our consideration; for the rest we reserve a kindly irony and the comfort of Browning's Andrea del Sarto:

> Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
> Or what's a heaven for?

Theirs be the glory of the imperfect and the earned rejection slip.

Now, the poet, the dramatist, the novelist, the original essayist, the gifted biographer — all face large problems in our country. I shall treat five major problems and try to give you the facts. These problems are economic, cultural, linguistic, personal, and spiritual.

Economic

The writer, like everybody else, needs money, but he has often had to get along on very little of it. Genius has always known poor pay. Edmund Spenser yearned for security, Milton received a pittance for *Paradise Lost,* Coleridge was a pensioner on other men's purses all his literary life, Browning was supported by his parents till he was thirty, after which Elizabeth Barrett assisted in the project; Poe lived in shanties whereas his characters live in mansions of unparalleled splendor; Stephen Crane was almost a Bowery bum. Indeed there is truth in Coleridge's statement that the literary life is but bread and cheese by chance; and in the lament of John Ciardi, contemporary poet and teacher, who has said, "I get my crumbs in books and my bread from student themes." The making of literature has often required a pachydermatous hide and a spartan digestion. And even rich men like Henry James wished the psychological support of sales; he hoped, he said, to grow "in his temperate garden some specimens of the rank exotic whose leaves are rustling checks."

Do not be misled by the klieg lights shining on the fortunes of Fitzgerald, Twain, and Marquand. Most writers today need to supplement their literary incomes. Do not think of Mark Twain, who made and spent $100,000 in one year in the nineteenth century. Forget Harold Bell Wright and let Margaret Mitchell go with the wind. Forget George Eliot, who earned $1,500,000 — no income tax, and no literary agent. Remember that our poets of distinction have earned less than $500 a year from their poetry in the last thirty years. Remember that the average writer's income is today, in the words of Kenneth Roberts, "scrawny and having a rank odor." The men in the grey flannel suits riding the New Haven from New York to Connecticut are not poets.

Our culture on any intellectually significant level is multiple and splintered. Possibly on the level of decent mediocrity the United States does have a kind of soulless industrialized culture living on, with, and for things. Pragmatism, our dominant outlook, has made an instrument of the mind, and truth a matter of adjustment. The large public wants the cozy soul, safe from womb to tomb, in an expanding economy from whose technological cornucopia pours an endless stream of shining gadgets. It seeks surcease from sorrow in the movies, the slicks, sports, and tranquillizer pills. But who would call its authors writers? Above the level of the detectives, westerns, and slicks there is only the tangled skein of multiple commitment, conjecture, and agnosticism. In religion there is the vast range from the sentimental slush of Norman "Millicent" Peale to the complex Anglo-Catholicism of Eliot and Auden. The man who reads the fatty jargon of the typical educationists does not die of death, he dies of vertigo. In philosophy there are at least fourteen categories of intellectual dissonance as well as the latest school of genteel spectatorial analysis. In literary criticism, there are the impenetrabalists like Mr. Kenneth Bruke, the moralists like Van Wyck Brooks, the humanists like Babbitt, the formalists like Cleanth Brooks, and the literary historians in numerous universities. Whirl is King. Maybe it is best like Ezra Pound to mutter to oneself.

The significant American writer has no unified culture to grow out of and to speak to, no unified medieval world in which a monk writing in Rome could be understood by a monk reading in York. There is no common faith, no common symbolism, no great common apperceptive mass of reference and allusion, and so the great authors sometimes seem even to an educated person to write of matters as abstruse as astrophysics in a language as obscure as Sanskrit.

On the one hand, then, we find the learned, or esoteric author, on the other a vast public that has lost its reading nerve. Vitiated by television, "athletomania," and newspapers, the average reader regards the literary genius as an impenetrable stranger if not as a nut. The gap is profound, and since the great poets do not write for Burma Shave, the ordinary public may as well read the timetables on the Chesapeake and Ohio.

Linguistic

Part of the trouble is a matter of language and its use. The creative writer, as Allen Tate has said, is concerned with communion rather than with communication, with shared experience rather than with paraphrase. A work of literary art always tells more than it says. Communication means getting your meaning across. For communication, paraphrase is enough, for communion it is never enough. For communication an author can move on the level of denotation; for communion he must share experience; he wants to strip the veil of familiarity from the commonplace, to present a brave new world. That means in the words of the Imagists "death to the cliche," war on the trite phrase, "war," as Viereck says, against "lush adverbs and senile rhymes in tattered gowns." The creative writer wishes to electrify language. And so he uses jarring colloquialisms, arresting figures of speech, strange juxtapositions, unconventional syntax. He tries in the words of Pound "to resuscitate the dead art of poetry." Eliot tells us in *Prufrock*:

> I should have been a pair of ragged claws
> Scuttling across the floors of silent seas

Harte Crane that:

> Down wall, from girder into street noon leaks,
> A rip-tooth of the sky's acetylene.

Cummings tells us that spring is "puddle-wonderful," Sandburg points to "that pig-stacker there in the corner."

All these devices are meant to give us the feel and tone of experience rather than a shorthand transcript. They are a head-on assault upon the malfeasance of metaphor by ad-men, detective, and romance writers. We say, "All must die." The poet says with an eye to heightening experience:

> Beauty is but a flower
> Which wrinkles will devour
> Brightness falls from the air
> Queens have died young and fair
> Dust has closed Helen's eye
> I am sick, I must die
> Lord have mercy upon us.

Since the literary artist deepens experience both intensively and extensively, we have to work to share that experience; and in less traditional poetry than that which I have just quoted one may have to work hard. If we refuse to learn the great language, the poetry escapes us. Often, however, there is neither great language nor poetry; that also takes intelligence to discover.

Personal

The artistic temperament has always had its burden of personal tensions. The genius, whether real or self-appointed, does not easily mesh with society. He is often a troublesome knot of contrariety to himself and to others. Profounder sensibilities, intellectual snobbery, unmitigated conceit, neurotic imbalance, and just plain orneriness all play a part. Sometimes his difficulties result from a noble and serious effort to share a superior vision; after all, as Emily Dickinson has said, "Much madness *is* divinest sense." Brilliant people are seldom humble. As Keats has said, "I feel in myself all the vices of a poet — irritability, love of effect and admiration." Socrates may have been right, but I have known many smart people who knew a lot of things that weren't so. Making overwhelming demands upon themselves and especially others, burning for appreciation and reward but meeting with apathy and misunderstanding, the life of genius tends to be warfare upon earth within and without. For every well-ordered life of a Browning or Emerson, there are half a dozen Poes and Harte Cranes; and even a model of conventionality like Lord Tennyson, wearing the white flower of the blameless life, was an inveterate hypochondriac oozing melancholy and

> Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean.

In any society, particularly in a philistine society, the genius seems somewhat odd; and when he bursts, red-haired and loudmouthed upon the placid Victorian scene like Algernon Charles Swinburne, he strikes the public as something demonic. Tortured within, acidly critical of what is without, wanting public support and not getting it, the po like Hart Crane does not unexpectedly jump in the Caribbean Sea, because for him there is not

> the world dimensional for
> those untwisted by the love of things
> irreconcilable.

Spiritual

Frequently, all the preceding problems are exace bated by the lack of faith. The great writer nee unity and is oppressed by severance. He above a needs a staying center to his life. The writer lik the rest of us needs wholeness, and a man made i the image of God cannot find wholeness witho Him. The Christian religion is irrelevant to mos of the great writers of our time. St. Michael ma be on his heights on Mount St. Michael, but fo them he is guarding a stone-cold and empty church The ghost of eighteenth-century deism has neve been laid, the web of fate lies heavy still. The ro mantic heresy which tried to force a personal emo tional unity upon the universe through empathy ha been blasted for an irridescent if enchantingl beautiful dream. Wordsworth's violet by the moss stone no longer enjoys the air it breathes and ha been replaced by Harte Crane's "tarantula rattlin at the lily's foot." The writer has to go it alone, a Coleridge anticipated the modern mood already i 1797:

> Alone, alone, all all alone
> Alone on a wide, wide sea
> And never a saint to take pity on
> My soul in agony.

And so we get a literature of sadness, a literature of sick souls; the dim thicket of evil in Faulkner Fitzgerald's jazz age vampires; Hemingway's tough guys and their code of "Don't whimper." There is little nobility in it, and sometimes a sense of bitter despair. Tomorrow is gone. Between man and man, and man and God, there is only "the unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea."

In this wider world of our time we are in some respects an island and in others most decidedly a part of the main. Our writers share the lean and hungry look. The man who writes in *The Reformed Journal* or who wrote for *The Calvin Forum* has or has had the pleasure of seeing himself in print and paying for it. The man who writes for *The Banner* treads with a wary linguistic and cultural foot. Only on the personal and spiritual level is our problem less severe.

Yet we have had and do have men of letters, stimulating writers with gift, insight, and imagination. We have had creative writers also, although they have left us. What can we do to keep what we have and to cause the creative writer to flourish among us? I hope to consider this question in next month's *Journal.*

Some Thoughts on Woman Suffrage

by George Stob

THIS CONCERNS Woman Suffrage in the church.

At its Centennial Synod the Christian Reformed Church decided that "women may participate in congregational meetings with the right to vote."

This will be received with mixed feelings. Some will be happy that at long last the woman has been given some of her due in the Church of Jesus Christ. Others will no doubt look upon the action with indifference, thinking that the question of the woman's participation in congregational business is not a very vital issue. Still others will be uneasy and fearful of what this may lead to.

It was inevitable, in any event, that this should have come in the long process of the struggle for woman's rights. Women have long been ardent proponents of equality, not only for themselves, but for others as well. Women had been active in promoting the cause of freedom for Negro slaves in our country. But after that cause had triumphed in 1865, they began to concentrate on the endeavor to obtain equality for themselves in State and national life. This end was achieved, notwithstanding grave prophecies of the evil that would result from the emancipation of women, when the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States was ratified in 1920, providing that " the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

The intention of the Synodical decision is clear. It was intended to allow to congregations in the Christian Reformed Church the freedom to introduce woman suffrage if they should choose to do so. That is good as far as it goes. But one wonders whether it goes far enough. One might wish, for example, that the decision were based on Scriptural grounds coming out of a study that more clearly showed the Bible's teaching concerning the place of woman in the church. One might wish, too that the decision were more forthright, and less confused by limiting fears.

SCRIPTURE — RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTICE

Take the matter of Scriptural grounds. We should hope that in any matter of basic principle in the life of the church there would be careful concern to search out and set forth the teaching of Scripture.

But the Synod of 1957, while making a judgment about the woman in the life and work of the church, offers no Scriptural ground. It is simply said that "women may participate in congregational meetings with the right to vote," but it is not indicated on what Scriptural consideration this decision is based. This is unfortunate for more reasons than one.

For one thing, the force and authority of a Synodical decision on a matter of basic principle depends on its reference to Scripture. A thing is not right merely because a major church assembly calls it such. It is right only when the Scriptures teach it to be so. And this is the kind of right that should have been supplied in connection with the decision on Woman Suffrage.

Congregations ought to be led and bound by what the Scriptures teach. In this instance they are neither so led nor bound. Maybe this is due to the fact that there was no certainty or conviction at Synod about the Scriptural teaching on this question. This appears in part in the fact that the Advisory Committee said it was very careful to give its advice without grounds, "because the grounds would be debatable" (cf. *The Banner*, Aug. 30, 1957, p. 4). However, if Synod were not ready to give grounds for her decision, she should have desisted from making a ruling and left the matter to the discretion of consistories.

The only effect of the Synodical decision in this instance is to inform churches that they can now introduce woman suffrage without fear of Synodical displeasure or penalty. They have been given the "green light." It is likely, therefore, that many churches will now introduce woman suffrage. It might be hoped, however, that they will do so on the basis of their own convictions concerning its Scriptural propriety, and not merely on the basis of "Synodical approval." We live, after all, by the will of God's Word, not by the permission of institutional rules.

It may be observed, further, that a statement of Scriptural teaching on this question is eminently desirable, precisely because of the differences of opinion prevailing, and also because this is an area in which we are so very likely to be victims of traditional notions and prejudices. Some object to woman suffrage because "woman's place is in the home," and because it is thought that the man is the head of the woman. It may be very correct to say that "woman's place is in the home." But it may also become a shibboleth by which men easily impose unwarranted limitations on the woman's position and rights in society. It is true enough from the teaching of Scripture that the husband is

the head of the wife. Is it true that therefore the woman as female is everywhere subject to man as male, and therefore not entitled to a position of equality with the male, much less ever entitled to occupy an administrative or governing position?

There is only one safe way to legislate in matters on which there is difference of opinion among us, and that is to base any ruling on a clear indication of Scriptural warrant. And being as subject as we are to personal and social prejudices and predilections on this moot question, we are very much in need of the clear and objective teaching of the Word of God. It is therefore, a distinct loss that the recent Synodical decision was taken without advancing Scriptural ground.

To Be AND Not To Be

One could wish, too, that the decision were more forthright, and less confused by limiting fears. As it stands, the decision is rather indefinite and quite confused — even contradictory. This will appear from a closer examination of the decision, which reads as follows:

> Synod decides that women may participate in congregational meetings with the right to vote subject to the rules that govern the participation of men. The question as to whether and when the women members of any church shall be invited to participate in the activities of its congregational meetings is left to the judgment of each consistory (Acts 1957, Art. 155, p. 90).

On reading this one is moved to ask the question: On what right was Synod making a decision — on the right of women to vote, or on the right of a consistory to permit women to vote? Fundamentally, of course, the question was that of the woman's right. And this is maintained in the first part of the Synodical decision. That should also have automatically taken care of the other question — of the consistory's right.

But then Synod also proceeded in the same declaration to make a decision about the right of the consistory. And strangely, the last part of the Synodical decision allows to the consistory the right to deny the right which the first part of the Synodical decision had asserted.

Notice — the first part of the decision says that the woman has the right to ("may") participate in congregational meetings. The second part of the decision says that any consistory may at its discretion withhold this right (*whether* they shall be invited "is left to the judgment of each consistory").

This is confusing, isn't it. It makes for a decision that can be appealed to by parties standing on opposite sides of the question. The decision provides a legal basis for any woman church member to claim the right to participation in congregational meetings. She can contend: "Synod says *I may.*" But the same decision provides a legal basis for any consistory to deny the right which the wom may legally claim. The consistory can conte "Synod says *we may say that you may not.*"

It is hard to see how this can stand. If it d it will only tend to discredit church laws and chu government, and break down the whole machin of appeal. Church laws and church governm that stand on the side of both the claimants of rig and the violators of right are self-destroying. A a church member's appeal to a major ecclesiasti assembly for defense of an acknowledged right useless if the same church law that gives grou for appeal can be cited as basis for the rejecti of the appeal.

At this point it appears how serious is the la of solid Scriptural ground. It made for a decisi that is lacking in sure conviction. The decisi asserts the right of women to vote, but is witho confident ground for asking the observance of t right — in fact, leans forward to say that the rig may be suspended by any consistory.

The lack of solid Scriptural ground accounts f the dualism of Synod's decision, too. The decisi reflects a common Synodical fault — the attem to satisfy parties on both sides of a controversi issue. In this instance it appears that Syn wanted to satisfy both the proponents and t opponents of Woman Suffrage — and after a fas ion did. Sometimes opponent and proponent we combined in one person — in those who found n Scriptural ground for opposing it and yet hoped might be rather effectively limited.

Synod, therefore, tried at the same time to sa something and to say nothing. She aimed at decision that would have teeth in it and yet h unable to bite. She adopted a decision that embodie the recommendations of both the Majority and th Minority of her Study Committee (the first par *allowing right,* being that of the Majority; th second part, *permitting denial of right,* being that o the Minority).[1]

If only Synod had made herself sure that th decision of right were based on Scriptural teaching this confusion would not have resulted. In that cas the decision would have been the declaration of right that would have to be maintained, for we dar not oppose Scripture. But being without certaint of Scriptural ground, Synod proceeded to a decisio based on expediency. She forged a decision tha would presumably best preserve "peace and har mony." It is doubtful, however, that a decision s inherently contradictory can be productive of an meaningful kind of "peace and harmony."

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1. It may be observed that the Minority offered in hi report and recommendation this alliance of opposites. H concurred in the majority judgment that "women ma participate in congregational meetings with the right t vote," but recommended the further ruling that consistorie should decide whether they should be invited.

The Context of Fear

It seems that the decision on Woman Suffrage was taken in a context of fear. This accounts not only for its contradictory character, but also for the limitations that some sought to impose on any exercise of the woman's right.

There was fear — not only the fear that some consistories would object to an unqualified declaration of woman's right. There was another fear — the fear of the place and influence of women in the church.

The report of the discussion on this question which appeared in *The Banner* of August 30, 1957, is an interesting reflection of this fear. These reportorial quotes have a ring of familiarity about them. Said one delegate: "If the men vote one way and the women vote the other way and outvote the men, then the women do exercise leadership over the men." Another: "In the American churches, where the women have taken over, the men have left. There are many of our churches where there is going to be a disturbance if this goes through. Let's not recommend it." Still another: "In our church we have 40 widows. The women will have an overwhelming majority in our congregational meetings if this is adopted."

This is not most happily said or thought. It seems to suggest that our Christian women must be looked upon as a sort of scourge threatening to invade the congregational citadel of male exclusiveness and supremacy. But we don't think of our wives and mothers and sisters in that way. We are all thankful for what the Lord has given us in these lovely and discerning persons, who have been given by God to share with the men in the divinely ordered partnership of building homes and a society and a world, and serving the church and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dr. N. J. Hommes, in his book, *De Vrouw in de Kerk*, notes that the New Testament teaches us to consider how much good — not how much harm — the woman can do by full participation in the life of the church. "What strikes every unprejudiced reader of the New Testament is the function which the apostles entrusted, with great freedom and without question, to believing Christian women, and that in a time when Jewish-rabbinic wisdom and the imperial-Roman way of life had abandoned the woman to contempt and inferiority. What a difference, indeed, between the elevation of the woman in the New Testament and her degradation in the world of that day" (p. 8, my translation from the Dutch).

The fear of the consequences of woman suffrage accounts for some other interesting matters that came up in the Synodical discussion. It seemed, indeed, that while there was a feeling that women could not be denied the right to participate in congregational meetings, there was considerable hope that they might not be too strongly urged to attend congregational meetings, and that they might not exercise their rights too frequently or freely. This appears from the discussion of two related questions.

The first was the question as to whether the woman's participation in the congregational meeting was merely a right or whether it was also a duty. The question is not abstract. It has practical bearings. For if it is a duty, then the women should be *exhorted* to attend congregational meetings. If not one might only "invite" — with the understanding that they should feel perfectly free to stay at home.

It was concluded, therefore, that the woman's right does not involve duty. Now in the abstract it is quite true that right does not necessarily involve duty. A lady has a right to wear a red hat. This does not mean that it is her duty to do so. But there is a profound difference between a woman's choice of color and the implications of her church membership. If she has a right to vote at congregational meetings because she is a full and responsible member of Christ's Church, then very obviously her right is at the same time a duty. Church membership involves both right and duty to vote, just as citizenship in a civil society means both right and duty to vote.

It would be strange and contradictory, certainly, if upon the announcement of a congregational meeting some (the male sex) should be told that it is their duty to be present, while other members of the congregation, because of female sex, should be told that they are "invited" but don't have to come. The same consideration that makes a man's place in the congregational meeting a matter of duty, makes the woman's equal place an equal duty. The Lord's work in the business of the Church of Jesus Christ is not a recreational interest, in which she may engage according to her pleasure. The Lord's business — if she has any relationship to it at all — is her business, which is to say, her duty. And it is scarcely right to hope that woman suffrage will be made the more innocuous by spreading the theory that it is only right, not duty.

Another question was the question as to whether a woman should enter into discussion and debate at a congregational meeting. One of the delegates to the 1957 Synod was disturbed by the thought that if the women were given the right to vote, this would also involve the right and duty to discuss and debate. To this it was answered by one of the Synodical advisors: "The women should not begin to argue and debate. We should say to them: 'You may indicate your preferences, cast your vote, but you should not rule over the men.'" (*The Banner* Aug. 30, 1957, p. 4).

It is hard to know what good reason there can be for this suggestion of half-way membership for women, and this limited exercise of female intelligence and personality. Surely, if it is right for women to shape decisions by voting, it is just as right for them to shape decisions by speaking about them. In fact, we should hope that votes were based on intelligence instead of arbitrary will, and any assembly is better served by those who produce reasons than by those who do no more than mark a ballot.

To object to a woman's speaking because this is an exercise of "rule over the men," is certainly very far-fetched. When in marriage and in the home the woman discusses matters with her husband and makes a sound and salutary contribution to the marriage and the management of the home by good reasoning and judgment, a man would think this a service, and not an attempt to rule, and would therefore find it cause for thanksgiving, and not for complaint. As the church father Cyprian once observed in one of his letters: "We are not overcome when better things are presented to us, but we are instructed, especially in those matters which pertain to the unity of the church and the truth of our hope and faith" (*Epistle LXX*, Par. 3).

This kind of service by the woman to a congregational meeting should be received in the same spirit. One of the things that Solomon says in his great eulogy of the "worthy woman" is that "she openeth her mouth with wisdom" (Prov. 31:26). What warrant have we for attempting to close it at congregational meetings?

It may be thought that the Priscilla who helped in the instruction and correction of Apollos made some fine contributions to the congregational meetings of her day. It is also likely that the Christian women of our day might by their discussions and debates bless our congregational meetings with good counsel. There is no ground for assuming that their participation in the discussion would be an act of subversion.

We ought to consider not how far we can keep Christian women from the councils of the church nor how we might most effectively circumscribe their activities and influence when they are admitted, but rather how we might use their unique talents and abilities to best and fullest advantage. There is reason to believe that we will be encouraged to do the latter if we consult the New Testament rather than our long standing social prejudices.

N. J. Hommes observes: "Opposition is steadily arising among theologians as well as among active church members against the existing non-activity and inarticulateness of the woman in the church. This is looked upon as a serious defection from the New Testament standard, and there is therefore concern to break through all manner of rusty prejudices. There is much cause for gratification in this, because it is an undeniable fact that the New Testament church, as a militia of Christ, has known 'Women in Uniform' from the very beginning . . . . A growing sense of the New Testament structure of the church opens the eyes for the fact that for ages there has been in the church a devaluation of the task and place of the woman . . . Our day, indeed, urgently requires that we take the woman into the ecclesiastical household with apostolic joy and thanksgiving. Too long, already, we have let her particular gifts lie unused. The church must surrender her *one-sided activity on the part of the man,* and make full room for the activity of the woman. The backwardness of the church in contemporary society with reference to the task and calling of the woman is still very great." (*Op. cit.* pp. 7, 10).

As it is the duty of a faithful minister to draw those home that are gone astray, so it is likewise his duty to endeavor to keep those in peace and unity who are already in the church. If he be stubborn and self-willed, he will offend the flock of God, and make a breach in the church. In order, therefore, that he may serve God, and keep the church in peace and concord, he must not trust too much to his own understanding, nor be obstinate in his own opinion.

When we teach others, we must be willing to be taught also. For if we are not willing to learn, that others may profit by our instruction, we shall never be able to do our duty. Therefore, he whom God hath placed as teacher in His house, must show himself ready and willing to receive doctrine, and good instruction. We must be ready to harken when other men give counsel, and be willing to receive information. Thus we have the meaning of St. Paul in few words: namely, those who are called to preach the Word of God must take heed that they be not self-willed, but willing to be taught: they must be meek and quiet spirited; not puffed up with pride, but endeavoring to edify others; they must not think that they know all things, but on the contrary desire to learn continually, and be gentle in their behavior. Those who are lofty spirited, and self-willed, often become schismatics: that is to say, they trouble the church of God, and divide it into sects.

—John Calvin Sermon: *The Character of the Faithful*

The Japanese Church Must Repent

by Takaoki Tokiwa

IN 1959, ONE HUNDRED YEARS after the launching of Protestant missions in Japan, there will be various memorial activities sponsored by the National Christian Council, and other Christian organizations, to commemorate a century of Protestant preaching in this country, according to the *Christ Weekly*. On the occasion of this centennial celebration I felt constrained to undertake a solemn self-examination of my Christian life. I should therefore like to convey my thoughts for the kind consideration of my brethren.

Twelve years have passed since the end of the war and the nation is regaining its peace of mind. Nevertheless, in my own mind there is something for which I have been severely rebuked by my God. That thing is the worship of the Imperial Palace from afar (Kyujo Yohai) practiced in churches each Sunday during the worship service, throughout the entire country, during the war. Although I never participated in this heathen practice in the church of which I was pastor, it was only because my church was too small to be so stringently oppressed by the authorities and we had no church building. The fact that I abstained from heathen practices in my own church, however, is too poor an excuse to keep my conscience clear, since I partook in Emperor worship during union services held on several special occasions with other congregations. I admit, before God, that I committed the same sin with my other brethren.

During national crises, such as we experienced during the Pacific War, it is only natural for a Christian to support and cooperate whole-heartedly with the national policies. However, there is naturally one limitation. We obey the orders of the state, for it is an institution which God has established. But God has forbidden the use of this power and authority to dishonor Him, and we are freed from the obligation of obeying national orders if the latter dishonor God. It goes without saying that disobedience to government authorities on such occasions will usually result in the punishment of death. However, Christians during such crises must stand up for the honor of God and defend the purity of His Church, even at the cost of their lives, in order to resist the orders of the government authorities. It is highly regrettable that the Christian Churches of Japan shamelessly kept up this abominable man-worship every Sunday during the five long years of war. Of course, many of these Christian ministers, having been well-educated, did not believe in their hearts that the real God and the Emperor are on the same level, but to the eyes of unbelievers their acts were exactly the same as those of unbelievers. Thereby they greatly dishonored their God. We Papanese Christians smeared the face of God with mud during the war. Among men, it is a serious matter to damage the honor of others and it cannot be settled without some appropriate action being taken. It cannot be settled simply by saying some sweet apologies. Recently I have been trembling at the words of God saying to me, "What will you do having dishonored God and having smeared His face"? I feel that I must do something about this.

No Repentance As Yet

During the twelve years since the end of the war, the Japanese Christian churches have not indicated the slightest consciousness of their sin of idolatry which they committed publicly. Not only that, they have neither repented nor uttered a single word of confession, as if they are forgetting everything! Is this truly the right thing to do? To make matters worse, during the war our delegates went to Ise Shrine to pay homage (to the Sun Goddess). Why should we worship this "goddess"?

The Bible teaches us explicity, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that keep my commandments" (Exodus 20:3-6). Did we not provoke God's jealousy and disgrace Him? Didn't we make ourselves the enemies of God? Where can we find peace as the enemies of God? "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). "For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29).

The Japan Church of Christ (Kyu Nikki) held its synod on April 22, 1941 in the Japan Christian Hall, presently the Lutheran Center. At this synod there was an important overture, to discuss the matter of joining the proposed United Church (Kyodan) which was on the point of being formed. Each delegate there felt keenly the pressure threatening from the outside. I, myself, voted for the rejection of the overture, but the majority

decided in favor of joining the Kyodan. At that moment I felt relieved because I felt that there would be no more pressure of the State on the Church from now on. Cursed be such ease of mind! The easiness of mind I felt then was nothing but the very whisper of the sin which dwelt in my heart. This was the first step the Japanese Church took in order to avoid the cross which we should have borne. "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:24). Certainly this is an undeniable truth.

Self-Salvation But Few Martyrs

During the war we cherished carnal things, namely, the safety of the visible Church, far from manifesting the honor of God and boldly preaching the truth of God. If the Church had persisted in its refusal to worship the Emperor from afar (Kyujo yohai) there might have been much bloodshed. The visible Church of Christ might have been annihilated, but would it have been a loss to God? Would it have been a loss to Japan, in a real sense? I don't think so. The Church has many who testify with their mouths but few who witness with the shedding of their blood. Don't you think that the blood of martyrdom manifests the honor of God and fosters the true spirit of democracy? It is very commendable for us to plan various religious activities in commemoration of the centennial of Christian work in this country. I suppose it is not bad to invite prominent Christians from abroad, but are the people not forgetting God? We must not think that evangelism is so easy as this. We should not say, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace." We must not be at ease when this deep wound has not been healed. What is the present spiritual condition of Japan? The traditional "shushin," moral code, "giri," social obligation, or "ninjo," human feeling, which composed a kind of pre-war moral standard for Japanese in the school curriculum, have been abolished. It is only natural that they should be abolished. But no one can live without a moral standard. The old morality has lost its influence and the new criteria have not yet been established. We are presently living in a moral vacuum, the worst moral atmosphere, especially for juveniles.

If the moral situation in Japan can be saved, history teaches us that it can be brought about only by Christianity, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Without the real fear of God, man will neither attain to true knowledge nor correct conduct.

To speak frankly, however, do the Japanese Christian Churches have such power? Can they bring pressure upon the nation and declare, "Repent or you will perish"? Our enemies are not men, but "rulers, authorities, the cosmic powers of this present darkness; the spiritual forces of evil in t supernatural sphere" (Ephesians 6:12). We m defeat this Satan, but the task is beyond hum ability; we cannot defeat him unless we rece power from God. What are we to do to rece this power from God? I believe that we m return to God with heartfelt repentance, confess our sin, asking forgiveness with humility a brokenness of heart, looking for nothing but t glory of God. Our God knows everything in o innermost heart. He should never be insulted. W must remember that we are always standing befo the God who is our Judge so it is useless for us try to conceal our faults.

In the face of the approaching centennial drive, earnestly hope that Christian ministers will reali the truth of which I am speaking and join in prayi that we might have an opportune time publicly confess the sins our churches committed in t recent past. I believe this is an urgent and nece sary preliminary to all memorial activities.

*This article is reprinted from *The Bible Times* with t kind permission of its Editor and upon the suggesti of one of our missionaries in Japan. The article breath a profoundly biblical spirit and the *Journal* is glad present it to its readers as an example of the kind writing done by leaders in our Japanese sister Church.

Fill Thou my life, O Lord, my God,
In ev'ry part with praise,
That my whole being may proclaim,
Thy being and Thy ways;
Not for the lip of praise alone,
Nor e'en the praising heart,
I ask, but for a life made up
Of praise in ev'ry part.

Praise in the common words I speak,
Life's common looks and tones,
In intercourse at hearth or board
With my beloved ones, —
Enduring wrong, reproach, or loss
With sweet and steadfast will,
Loving and blessing those who hate,
Returning good for ill.

So shall each fear, each fret, each care,
Be turned into song,
And ev'ry winding of the way
The echo shall prolong,
So shall no part of day or night
From sacredness be free,
But all my life, in ev'ry step,
Be fellowship with Thee.

—Horatius Bonar

BOOK REVIEW

HE COMMUNICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, *by Hendrik Kraemer.* 128 pp. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956. $2.50.

The word *communication* appears erywhere nowadays: it is the subject conferences, panels, and even conven-ons. It is a word which figures in-reasingly in the titles of rhetoric hand-ooks. It is undergoing clinical scrutiny y linguistic and philosophical surgeons. is the palpable dilemma of advertis-rs, the solicitous concern of public rela-ons directors. Never before, it seems, ave people sensed the complexity of he act of communication, nor worked o intently to be understood. Commu-ication is also the concern of contem-orary theologians and pastors, and o church alert to the times can ignore he many current studies about this ubject.

Hendrik Kramer's book is exceed-ngly useful as an introduction to the roblem. The author is a Netherlander f erudition, with an independent and ncisive mind. He is internationally known in the world of theology, linguis-ics, and allied fields. He was visiting rofessor at Union Theological Semi-nary in 1955, and the Laidlaw Lecturer at Knox College, Toronto, in 1956. The book under review consists of the Laidlaw lectures. His earlier book, *The Christian Message in a non-Chris-tian World,* has received wide recogni-tion.

The central theme of these lectures can be put something like this: Al-though we must avail ourselves of all the expert help that linguists, sociolo-gists, and psychologists can give us, the problem of first magnitude for the church is simply this, that it must, in "agonizing reappraisal" about its true nature and calling, humbly sacrifice its institutional character, its conser-vatism and fear, its undue concern for ecclesiastical polity, and must instead offer itself in disinterested service and fellowship to the world.

But this statement does not begin to do justice to the penetrating analyses and the convincing type of action Kraemer proposes. A mere listing of the chapters will already indicate that some material eludes the thesis state-ment: (1) "Communication in Biblical Perspective," (2) "Communication in the History of the Church," (3) "Psy-chological, Sociological, and Cultural Factors," (4) "The Breakdown of Com-munication," (5) "Restoring Commu-nication." Yet the emphases which appear in this formulation occur so frequently throughout the book that they can be said to constitute the imperative the author wishes to deliver.

In the course of his book, Kraemer cites three causes which threaten to frustrate our God-created impulse and need for communication with Himself and our fellow-men: (1) the radical fracture in the relations between God and man which occurred at the fall, the implications of which for communica-tion were so vividly dramatized in the episode of Babel; (2) the subsequent scandal of the gospel, the mystery of iniquity which brings about spiritual cardiosclerosis; (3) the secularization of the church — its unwarranted attempts to control the state, its use of force and coercion to dominate the intellectual and spiritual life of man, its conservatism and fear — in short, that state of mind which is motivated by a greater concern to preserve itself as an institution, than to discover and uphold the truth. In addition to these basic causes, Kraemer points out sever-al features of the modern world which compound the difficulty of the communi-cation problem: (1) the industrial and technical revolutions, with their shatter-ing of the age-old life patterns; (2) the mobility of modern life, with its threat to stable community living; (3) the wide-spread assumption that the church is irrelevant to the concerns of modern man; (4) the assumption by the govern-ment of many of the tasks which formerly belonged to the church; (5) the distortion of the Biblical message by liberalism, which suggests that the essential thing about man is good will, and that religion is a useful thing to achieve it; (6) the practice of orthodox churches to insist on doctrinal exposi-tions — excellent in itself — but the frequent failure of the clergy to translate doctrinal formulations in terms that are meaningful to the hearers, who sincerely look for a genuinely Christian answer to their problems, and who protest that they are getting stones for bread.

It is to the last of the three basic causes, the secularization of the church, that Kraemer devotes most of his atten-tion. He illustrates, for example, how the institutional mind of Christianity has never been able to communicate effec-tively with the Moslem ideology, which is also a social and political construct, and which, therefore, like Christianity, has had an "official" character. Simi-larly, the church has been unsuccessful, suggests Kraemer, in maintaining bridges between itself and heretics. The elemental demands of Christian love would require that those who opposed the official position should be treated as erring sheep or as people from whose protest the church could conceivably benefit. Instead, when opposition oc-curred the official ecclesiastical machin-ery moved into action, and denunciatory, anathematizing, and invective lan-guage was hurled at the non-conformist. And the unwillingness of the church to risk her ecclesiastical identity has likewise seriously impeded her mission efforts.

Kraemer suggests that the first ap-proach to re-establishing fruitful com-munication with the contemporary world must lie in a rectification by the church of its historical errors, and in conform-ing to its true nature, namely, to be-come servant to everybody and every-thing in the name of the Suffering Serv-ant. What must the church surrender in this re-appraisal? These: her pride in her past, her self-esteem, her pres-tige, her complacency about loyalty to confessions and traditions, her ultiliza-tion of secular notions of success and efficiency, and the glib abuse of faith as a sales article.

The second approach concerns the methods of evangelism. These are pre-

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requisites to an effective encounter with the contemporary world: (1) a thoroughgoing acquaintance with the modern mind from the inside, and some conviction about where it is to be met — whether in industry, labor, the universities, business, the masses, or modern life in all its bewilderment; (2) the removal of the offensiveness of ecclesiastical and theological jargon, so little understood, so often used as an excuse for thought; (3) a recognition of the potential contribution of laymen, who have not been taken so seriously in evangelistic strategy since the fourth century; (4) the search for a new "style" of life — that is, a new synthesis of Christian *liberty* and *asceticism*, disciplines to be re-examined in terms of their greatest effectiveness in the kingdom of God; (5) the humility to recognize that the catastrophes which have overcome the church — secularism, technical progress (often achieved in defiance of the church and her negative attitude), loss of prestige and repute, and the disturbing effects (so Kraemer calls them) of Biblical research — are intended as blessings in disguise, as scourges to incite the church to creative thinking and self-scrutiny so that she may be dislodged from untenable positions and false defenses, and may respond in hope and love to a stricken and broken world.

No doubt the church could here and there reply to some of these accusations. It might be tempted especially to remind us that communication has two facets, and that the hearers have not always done their part. But that would call for another book, Moreover, I do have reservations about Kraemer's attitude towards Holy Scripture. His statements about this are few and scattered, and there is actually not sufficient material to determine with certainty just what his conception is of authority and inspiration. But some indication of his attitude towards the Bible can be inferred from several observations. He says, for example — and I think he makes too much of the point — that it is a crude intellectualism which insists on a negative term — infallibility — as the cardinal tenet of the Bible, and that this is equivalent to language which would call God "not unholy." Moreover, says Kraemer, the church must take more seriously the findings of modern Biblical research, even though these findings threaten the doctrine of the literal inerrancy of the Bible. He gives no details. Finally, he informs us, he accepts the authority of the Bible but on the basis simply of its self-vindicating character. Says he: "The Bible in its essential content proves itself, if one takes the trouble to take it fully seriously. It needs no dogma of inspiration to justify the claim for its authority, and to demonstrate its transcendency above all theological systems and formulations." Although some of these observations sound similar to the reflections of Reformed theologians, it is obvious that there are significant questions we would like to put to Kraemer. But, taking Biblical insights seriously, he has written a stimulating book, a chastening book, and withal a sane book with an attainable program of action. It deserves a wide reading.

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LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

SIRS:

As a former member of the Christian Reformed church, my interest in your denomination (within the limits of my time and ability) has continued.

I have known, and now know, many devout members of your church who, by their exemplary lives, have greatly influenced my own. But these Christians were not outstanding for their mastery of theological abstrusities. They were solicitous of purity of doctrine, to be sure, but they were even more concerned (probably without being aware of it) with purity of motivation. There was no separation in their lives between labor and religion, between business and religion, between church and state, between the spiritual and the secular. They really believed that "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." Their every deed, as well as thought and word, reflected an overpowering desire to do everything "as in the light of the eternal." Doing that, I think many of them, even though they might have considered it unorthodox to admit openly, felt in their inmost beings that personal "salvation" was a by-product, not an end in itself.

For the past few years, my best source of information regarding the Christian Reformed church has been *The Reformed Journal*, which I read regularly and attentively. Some of the viewpoints expressed, particularly regarding divorce, labor unions, and recreational forms were, in my opinion, a bit anachronistic. But I am in no way qualified to set myself up as a judge. This is merely a personal observation. When I attended Calvin College I remember remarking to a professor that I had a feeling the Christian Reformed church would end up historically as did the New England churches served by the Reverends Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards. He was, understandably, shocked. The remark was uncharitable, unfair, and extremely presumptuous.

More than a quarter of a century has passed since than. But I still think that unless the church formulates a theology that is positive instead of negative; unless she develops a "life-and-world-view" that goes beyond the content of Dr. A. Kuyper's *Stone Lectures;* unless she evolves, enunciates, and applies principles that have realistic

levance to complex modern issues, e may continue to expand externally 'by birth and inheritance") and to ourish financially, but inwardly she ill become not only static, but ossified.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. What really started out to say was that the rticles of Dr. James Daane have always een stimulating as well as eminently eadable. His most recent contribuon, "The State of Theology in the hurch," in your September issue, was o fascinating that despite its length and with the Tigers losing to the enators on TV), I read it through in ne sitting.

Accepting Dr. Daane's premises, verything he says seems to be irrefutble. He makes his points with such larity and vigor of expression, and uch breadth of historical perspective, hat I am looking forward with trenendous interest to the rejoinders, if ny.

After all, the idea of "God's Sovereignty" is as old as the history of he Church. On the basis of what might be a superficial comparison, I hink the Jansenist logicians of Port Royal and the predestinarian Molina presented the arguments for predestination with greater competence and clarity, and with finer sensitivity to the subtleties of the concept, than Hoeksema and Van Til have done. I grant that the former may not have been more richly endowed with intellectual acumen, but they were (I can't resist this facetious comment) simply subject to fewer distractions, domestic, administrative, and otherwise.

My own conclusion, for what it is worth, is that the subject from a strictly theological standpoint, is utterly beyond human comprehension, and that it is arrogant to claim final validity for any interpretation. God is God. His ways are not our ways and His thoughts not our thoughts. Incidentally, the most comprehensive work on predestination I have ever read is that of Fr. Garrigou LaGrange. I don't know whether anything comparable exists in Protestant theological literature.

Fr. Lagrange concedes that ultimate truth can never be reached through theological syllogisms or dialectical methods. St. Paul admitted as much when, after being caught up in the third heaven, he said that "he saw and heard things that are unutterable." St. Thomas of Aquin, after a similar glimpse of the beatific vision, said, "all I have written is a straw compared with what I have seen." And there have been many other men and women of God who, though stressing the importance of clearness and sharpness in theology, were even more emphatic in insisting that the Infinite cannot be comprehended by the finite; that no word, symbol, ritual, or system of logic can be more than a fragmentary (and, frequently, faulty) expression of ultimate Divine Reality. Perhaps it would be wise to repeat with Francis Thompson: "Those shaken mists unsettle for a space, then round the half-glimpsed turrets slowly wash again." Or, we might reflect on the profound poetic insight of Georgia Starbuck Gailbraith when she was moved to write: "So lest our vision burn to dust and ashes, God shows us truth in bits and flashes . . . White revelations that the brain can comprehend and still stay sane. But we, poor fools, demand truth's noon, who scarce can stand its crescent moon."

Dr. Daane makes the point that the Christian Reformed church has "avoided the theological extremes of Hoeksema and Van Til by the acceptance of what is commonly called the apparent paradoxes or contradictions of Scripture." But these paradoxes, in my opinion, are not limited to the theological "pairs of terms" listed by Dr. Daane. To me, the supreme paradox of Scripture is that "he who would save his life shall lose it." I take this to mean that to the extent my religion is self-regarding, to that same extent I am actually irreligious. I know it is difficult, if not impossible, to get away from this self-centered type of religion. The Roman Catholic Church makes a concession by permitting a higher and lower form of contrition. Nevertheless, it is true that the "faith that moves mountains" means absolutely nothing, according to St. Paul, unless it is motivated by charity. "Not those who cry Lord, Lord, shall enter the Kingdom." The cup of cold water and the visiting of the forsaken are the concrete expressions of true religion that will, according to Scripture, differentiate the sheep from the goats.

Truly religious persons of *all* faiths believe with John Calvin that "whatsoever is praiseworthy in man is by the grace of God." And such persons never doubt the "Sovereignty of God." The only time they get into trouble and risk the sin of presumption is when they attempt to define it, in any manner whatsoever. It seems to me that any theology that makes a "central doctrine" of election and reprobation is not only static but almost completely meaningless, man's mind being what it is. If it is said that this is the work of the Holy Spirit, that is, the assurance of election, all I can say is that judging from the evidence, the Holy Spirit is not overly active. I am reminded of Dr. Henry Van Dyke's stricture of the late Dr. Machen's attempt to apply an extreme form of logical positivism to theology. "It is," he said, "an abysmal, atrabilious travesty of the Gospel!" And it cannot be denied that Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart." He did not say, "Blessed are the pure in doctrine."

Since the Christian Reformed church believes in "the priesthood of all believers," and since I regard myself as a believer, perhaps this suggestion will not be too summarily rejected. It seems to me that what the Christian Reformed church needs, instead of a systematic theology posited on the fate of the reprobate or a "simplistic conception of God's counsel," is a dynamic theology, beginning with a thorough re-

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examination and new formulation of epistemology and criteriology, and then going on to explore and embrace every aspect of Revelation in its broadest form, making wise and effective use, or at least admitting the existence of historical realities, traditional teachings, scientific findings, philosophical developments, and psychological discoveries. Only such a theology, made intelligible to theologians and understandable to preachers, can aid modern man in finding his way out of the technological jungle in which he is now, to all appearances, hopelessly lost.

It is a disheartening fact that most people still seem to attach more value to form than to substance. They appear to be far more concerned with keeping the Ten Commandments, or in the negative avoidance of grosser sins, than in fulfilling the positive command of Christ "to love God above all else and your neighbor as yourself." If church members, even fractionally and imperfectly, really practiced what they profess, there is no question but what we would have an entirely different and much more humanitarian form of political and economic organization. I am tempted to use stronger language, but I'll simply state that nothing is solved by trying, with Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, to rationalize the irrational for personal aggrandizement; nor do I think it in the highest tradition of the Christian faith to "decide" with Dr. Billy Graham, to relegate present and urgent practical problems to the hereafter for final solution. The main task of the church, any church, today is to bludgeon or beguile people into thinking in terms that go beyond narrow self-interest. The tendency to sink into premature complacency, serenity, or just plain apathy is *not* Christian. The redemptive work of Christ has been wrought! It is available in a fulness that illuminates the mind as well as touches the heart. Cramping it, crushing it, to the limitations of emotions, or words, or an abstract creed, is to squeeze the life out of it.

No one knows how or when the Kingdom of God will be established on earth. All we know is that preceding its externalization, it must take roots in the hearts of men. We are warned not to try to distinguish the sheep from the goats here and now. The tares, we are told, will continue to grow with the wheat. God will separate them in His own way and in His own good time. Meanwhile, we can reflect the image of the Divine only to the extent that we, like Mary, "Choose the better part." Theology we must have, but an obsessive attempt to peer into the secret counsels of the Most High may be nothing but a form of spiritual pride.

Prayer? Yes! Contemplation? Yes! Intellectual honesty? Aboslutely! Applying the spirit of the Beatitudes and of the 13th chapter of I Corinthians to every human endeavor? Emphatically yes! Using the mind and trying to develop its full potentials? It's the only activity that differentiates us from animals! Theology? Within reason . . . but may we forever be delivered from a return to scholastic hair splitting, or from the imposition of a fantastic, legalistic theological scheme, or from men claiming priority for extremes of logical abstractions!

These are admittedly the "fuzzy" views of a layman and an outsider, but they may give you a clue as to how and what some of us are thinking. This letter has been written hurriedly and somewhat haphazardly, just squeezed in between commercial assignments and never-ending distractions.

Respectfully
RALPH J. BOLT

Grand Rapids, Mich.

SIRS:

Dr. James Daane's latest contribution in the *Journal*, "The State of Theology in the Church," causes one to think and reflect.

Now I do not agree with everything he writes, but this statement of his bears repeating: "Unless Systema Theology constantly draws upon well-springs of Biblical studies, it comes hard and arid and ceases flourish. Divorced from the ma spring of life, it precipitates into pulpit ministers, unaccustomed biblical study who preach Systema Theology rather than Scripture: To sure, sermons still have texts, but th have little to do with the text avowed under consideration."

Let us have once again more expo tory sermons rather than sermons th tell us how to live and what we mu do. Expound the Word and then t heart will be touched.

Sincerely yours.
JACK ARENS

Holland, Mich.

SIRS:

I have read with much interest ar deep concern the article by Dr. Jam Daane under the caption "The Sta of Theology in the Church" in th September issue of the *Reforme Journal* and feel constrained to sha with you some of my impressions.

Since my days at Princeton I hav been an admirer of the intellectu virility of your ministers. As an Arm Chaplain I learned to appreciate th seriousness and loyalty toward th deep things of God manifested in th lives of some of your young laymen I have therefore felt that there ha been much in your program and em phasis that other communions coul do well to emulate.

However, within recent years I hav become apprehensive that your Churc may be pursuing a course that ma make it vulnerable to many evils. I church history teaches us anything it is the fact that violent reactions i one direction have come as a resul of unbalanced emphases in another. believe that Dr. Daane is entirely righ when he warns of the danger of theo logical hair splitting. As I hav listened to some of the preaching from your pulpits and have read more of the writings of our ministers, I have fel that they are in danger of becoming stilted and hidebound in their mode of expression and are too often lacking in evangelical warmth and freedom Unless a change is soon inaugurated leading to a fresh approach to the Word of God and a renewal of the practice of expository preaching, together with more emphasis on practical Christianity defections similar to those occurring in your sister denominations may soon begin to appear among your own people

Theology is a useful means to the understanding of the nature of God and of our salvation, but if it is

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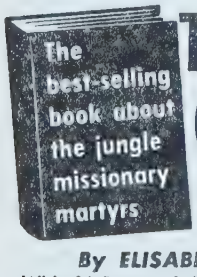

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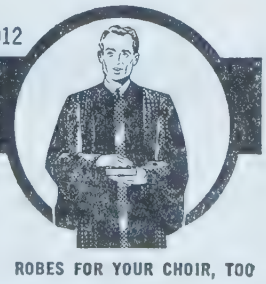

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lowed to become an end in itself it ay become a curse.

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IRS:

Dr. DeBoer's reply was very cour- ous. I should like to continue the onversation, for I see that he means o defend what he provisionally recom- nended: we would do well to under- tand philosophy as a skill.

I had asked how do you relate hilosophy defined as a skill to the nan who is a philosopher ("concrete hilosopher"). He answered: just as relate the carpentry skill to a man vho is a carpenter. I shall then ask ıow do you relate the carpentry skill o the man who is a carpenter. And ıe will answer (?): they are not elated; being a carpenter and being a man have nothing to do with one another.

This would clarify his position. I do not agree; but I see why he could not help me formulate how philosophy defined as a skill and a man who is a philosopher go together, because he denies that there is any relation.

If I understand it correctly, such a position has far-reaching implications. I of course agree that some men are carpenters and other men not, some men are philosophers and other men not. I think Dr. DeBoer would have to agree that some men are artists and other men not, some men are theologians and other men not. Now if he maintains that carpentry and philosophy are special activities, skills, with no relation to the man who is carpenter and philosopher, I may also expect him to maintain that the special activities of art and theology are also skills with no relation to the man who is currently artist or theologian. This leaves a man and his profession rather disassociated, whatever his profession may be.

I think that such a position is a mistaken position for a Christian. My conviction is that what a man is pervades what he does, and that in the realm of theoretic thought, for instance, Plato's habit of thinking (the theoretical orientation I am inclined to call philosophical) does indeed have bearing upon his low estimate of women and his demi-urge creation. How the inner man and his daily activity go together and how the basic theoretical orientation of a man affects his particular moral and theological judgments is a complicated but valid problem. It does not deserve an over-simplified answer; but it may also not be positivistically dismissed.

Dr. DeBoer asks further what I mean by saying that I suspect Positivists often reduce language to a logical appendage; do I mean that analysis of talk makes it useless?

No, I do not mean that analysis of talk makes it useless. I mean this: that talk understood as symbols of ideas is a questionable view of language. It is a questionable view of language because it denies language a lingual character and makes language logical in character. When the sentence "God is love" is taken to be words representing the *logical* subject "God" and the *logical* predicate "is love," you certainly do have a conundrum how can one talk about God; because *talk* about God now means *analysis* of God, and it is quite rightly felt that man cannot analyze God. Analogy is made the escape solution. The words "should not be understood quite literally": "empirical situations" however prompt our use of them.

This seems to me a shaky conclusion. No wonder many a thinker today finds Christian talk meaningless. He does not have Dr. DeBoer's *deus ex machina* of belief and more belief.

My protest against so much of the contemporary Positivistic language analysis is that this questionable view of language underlies the observations. I am tempted more and more to think their analysis is only caviling or pointless playful exercise in words. A questionable view of language is also not a good beginning for the exacting task of making Christian belief meaningful to the unbeliever.

I have no ready-made solution, but would suggest the following:

Language is speech and not a combination of word-symbols. When you analyze the speech "God is love" you get rhetoric. When you analyze the belief "God is love" you get theology. When you analyze the relation of the lingual and the faith aspects of the spoken belief "God is love" you get a philosophical proposition.

Even Positivists get these philosophical propositions. (Wittgenstein's reduction of philosophy to only a philosophical activity is sophistry; his very "Philosophy is not a theory but an activity" is itself a philosophical proposition.) Dr. DeBoer's philosophical proposition comes down to this: "The spoken belief "God is love" is an ana*logical* formulation of the *fact* that God is love — to which I personally happen to give supralogical assent; this formulation is logically inadequate, but it is the (ana)logical best that circumstances permit." This is a good Neo-Positivistic analysis by a transcendent theist or monotheist.

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To put my difference sharply: I personally am not a transcendent theist. I do not believe in God's existence and try to formulate it logically. The reality of God is not an *onto-logical* one to my way of thinking. My God *is* Jesus Christ. This difference may appear a subtlety, but maybe it somehow influences my approach to analyzing the spoken belief "God is love."

The spoken belief "God is love" — I would begin to analyze — is *lingual* expression of the speaker's *trust* that God is love; it is a straightforward declaration of a reasonable faith. When a Christian believer says "God is love" he is confessing orally that God became Man to save him from the death of sin. Or when a Humanist believer says "God is love" he is confessing orally that despite appearances all is right in the world and Humanity will end up well. This spoken belief is not even logical. What is logical about this spoken belief is simply that it can be analyzed.

Thus I am taking two criticisms of Neo-Positivism as Dr. DeBoer represents it.

(1) To understand philosophy as a particular skill and as unrelated to the man who is a philosopher, is a mistaken position that overlooks fundamental philosophical problems;

(2) His analysis of "God loves us" was not analysis of language but of logical ideas; instead of clarifying discourse such analysis is a questionable interpretation of language.

And in the hope of stimulating *Journal* readers who are more familiar with Neo-Positivism than I to face the challenge Clifton Orlebeke has succinctly outlined "Does Christianity Make Sense?" *Reformed Journal*, June, 1957. I have tried to suggest an approach to the problem: (1) language is by nature lingual and not logical; (2) What spoken belief means depends upon what the speaking believer believes.

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It could be that our power to make *Christian* belief meaningful to the unbeliever may depend not so much upon some kind of re-formulation of statement as upon re-formation of our belief itself.

CALVIN SEERVELD

Rome, Italy

REPLY

SIRS:

I appreciate Mr. Seerveld's concern about matters suggested to him by my little papers. I am sure that if the two of us could study and talk together at some length, both of us would learn something; certainly I would. In what follows I shall be very brief, partly because I have had no leisure recently. Also I shall limit my remarks to Mr. Seerveld's two points. I trust he will realize that we are much closer together, as men and believers, than we may be on the technical, theoretical issues raised in his letter.

(1) Mr. Seerveld supposes (he first nearly states, than he as good as states) that I said there is no relation between a man's being a man and his being a philosopher. I did not say this. I did not say there is no relation between being a man and being a carpenter; I did not dissociate the man from his skill. I did say that the relation between being a man and being a philosopher is like that between being a man and being a carpenter. It is also like that between being a twelve-month-old child and being able to walk and able to use the words "Mama" and "pretty" on suitable occasions. It is also like that between being a believer and being a theologian, and like that between being an English-speaking person and being a grammarian. This is not the place to explore the similarities (and the differences) between the various relations listed. The list is intended to invite Mr. Seerveld to ask why there should be something peculiar about the man-philosopher relation which does not obtain with the man-carpenter or the child-walker relation. I propose that no mystery clouds the first relation which does not cloud the others.

I *recommend* what I propose. I recommend that we try to look at philosophy, i.e., the special skill of the man who is a philosopher, in this way, to take this view of it; and after trying this, that we take a fresh look at the respects in which, e.g., Plato and Augustine are alike and different. Agreed that both are philosophers. What does this commit us to? What further statements does this lead to? Agreed that one is a Christian, the other is not. Agreed that Augustine is a Christian philosopher, and that Plato is a non-Christian philosopher. Why call them both philosophers? And is it that *qua* philosophers they differ as being one of them non-Christian and the other Christian? I favor answering the last question "No." Mr. Seerveld does not favor this, it seems. He says that he is inclined to call philosophical the theoretical orientation of Plato's in virtue of which Plato is religiously non-Christian. He may call things as he pleases; I do not favor his preference, and I do not see that anything is gained by naming Plato's fundamental religious outlook a theoretical orientation. This is a metaphor, and perhaps misleading. The point is small but important; we differ on it because Mr. Seerveld and I do not both of us want to say the same about what philosophy is.

(2) Mr. Seerveld alleges that I deny that language is lingual. I do not see how I could ever have denied this; since to this moment I have never had a notion what it would be to deny it. Apparently his statement that language is speech explains his statement that language is lingual. But what difference between speech and talking may be escapes me. He imputes to me the thesis that talk is understood as symbols of ideas. But I did not propound this thesis; or rather, the thesis as he outlines it is too fuzzy for me to guess whether I did or did not propound it. So I simply do not follow him. And in a sense this is all there is to say about his second point.

I think that Mr. Seerveld makes an artificial distinction between talk and speech, and his distinction between "logical" and "lingual" is likewise artificial. He imputes to me a view of language which he invented, and the result is his unjust and disdainful comments on the logical or philosophical activity of examining the various ways in which sentences are used. The analysis of "God is love" which he repudiates will have to recur when he attends to what he calls "the *fact* that God is love." Perhaps he thinks he can avoid the task of explaining his rules for using or not using the expression "God is love" by appeal to "reasonable faith." If this is what he wants to do, he would be smothering the problem. I am confident that this is not what he wants. I think that he is working under the handicap of having accepted an artificial sense of the meaning of "logic" and "philosophy" and "analysis."

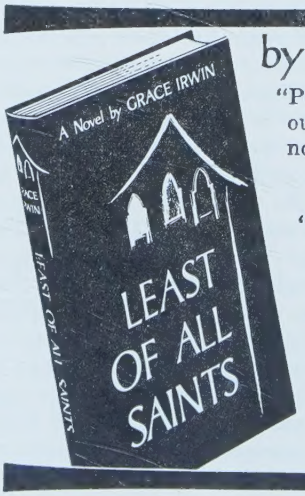
I share Mr. Seerveld's concern about helping an unbeliever realize that the Christian faith is not meaningless. But the words "meaningless" and "meaningful" are ambiguous. One unbeliever might say: "I realize what you Christians are trying to tell me, but I can't believe it; it's meaningless to me." Another might say: "You Christians talk in such a way that I cannot make out what you are asking me to believe or state; it's meaningless." If I were to cope with the second of these remarks I should be doing philosophy — exploring the uses of sentences, the rules for using kinds of expressions in kinds of situation. If I were to cope with the first of these remarks, I should be acting as a man and not as having developed a special skill. It is certainly not news that the birth of faith in persons is mysterious (the work of the Holy Spirit); and I am sure that Mr. Seerveld knows better than I do the appropriate things to say about it.

JESSE DE BOER

Lexington, Kentucky

CORRECTION

Will the reader please note that a word was dropped from the article on "The Militant Mind (III)." The first sentence of the next to last paragraph in the second column on page 17 of the October JOURNAL should read: "The fact is that the Christian is not permitted *simply* to fight unregenerate culture."



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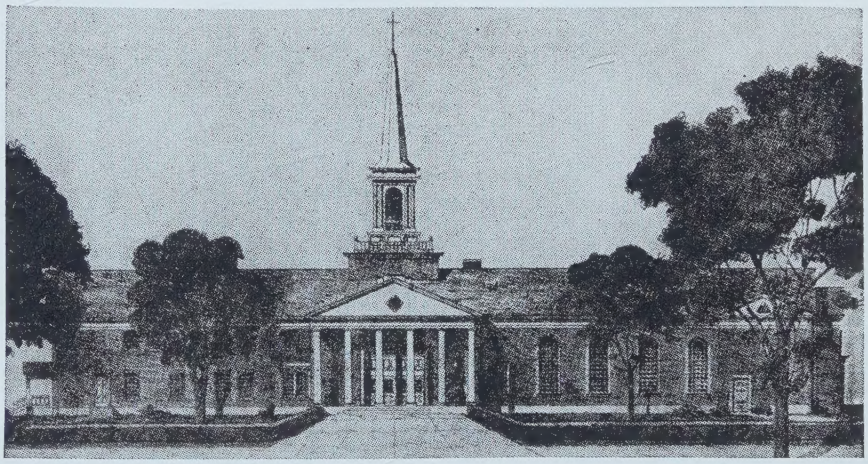

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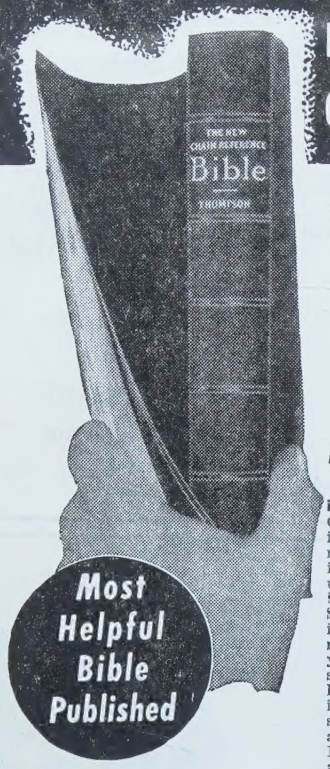

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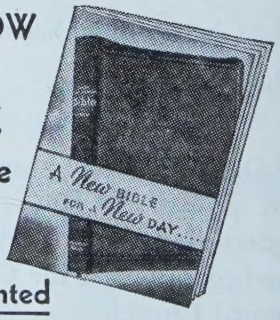

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